

Methodist Church
(First United Methodist Church)
200 N. Division Street
Carson City
Nevada

HABS NO. NEV-13-10 HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. NEV-13-10

METHODIST CHURCH (FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH)

Location: 200 North Division Street (NW corner of North Division and Musser Streets), Carson City, Nevada

Present Owner: First United Methodist Church

Present Occupant: Congregation of First United Methodist Church

Present Use: Church sanctuary and Sunday School

Statement of Significance: Carson City's Methodist Church is a substantial stone church of the mid-nineteenth century with well executed Gothic Revival details. The congregation it serves is the oldest of its denomination in the state, and the church is known as "The Cradle of Nevada Methodism."

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1865. Although the property on which the structure was erected was not deeded to the trustees of the church until 1866, most accounts give 1865 as the date for the beginning of construction. While one reference states that by June 1866, the church "still incomplete, had involved an outlay of \$5,000*," court records indicate that the land was not secured by the church until September of that year. It has been stated, and may well be the case, that the property had been acquired earlier, but that the official transaction was not made until later. It is known that the building was completed by September 1867 and was dedicated on the 8th of that month. Total cost was given at \$10,000.

2. Architect: none known

3. Original and subsequent owners:

The Church is built on lots 8 and 9 of Block No. 14 of Proctor and Green's Division of Carson City. (Frank M. Proctor and B.F. Green were two of the four original purchasers in 1858 of the Eagle Ranch, upon which Carson City was platted).

*Noreen Humphreys, "One Small Step" (Carson City, 1969), p. 7.

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The following references tracing title to the church property are found in the Ormsby County, Nevada Deed Books:

- 1865 Deed, February 1, 1865, recorded in Book 8, page 590. Mrs. Ruth Lecky bought all of Block 14 from Henry Fulstone for \$500.00.
- 1866 Deed, September 7, 1866, recorded in Book 10, page 100. The trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, "and their successors in office," received a deed in fee simple to lots no. 6 and the west 16 feet of lot no. 7 in Block No. 10, and the whole of Block no. 14, all in Proctor and Green's Division. A recording fee of \$33.10 was paid by the trustees.
- 1867 Deed, September 3, 1867, recorded in Book 12, page 302. The trustees of The Methodist Episcopal Church paid J.M. Lacky and wife \$500 for Block 14 of Proctor and Green's Division.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The Rev. Warren Nims, pastor of the church from 1863 to 1866, seems in large part to have been responsible for the construction. Thompson and West's History of Nevada notes that during 1865, Nims "might have been seen every week-day driving a two-horse team hitched to a lumber wagon, on which he hauled all the rock used in the construction of the edifice." (The stone was hauled by the Rev. Mr. Nims from the Nevada State Prison Quarry.) Nims had the prisoners quarry and square the stone; then he hauled them and laid them himself. As built originally, the church was rectangular in plan, and four bays long. Bay divisions were marked by buttresses with pinnacles. A square tower projected slightly at the center of the east front. This was stone up to a point just above the roof ridge. Above that there was a square wooden belfry having one pointed-arched opening on each side, with louvers. This carried a pinnacle at each corner, and octagonal spire. An early photograph showing the building in this original state is in the HABS records.
5. Alterations and additions: In May 1874, only seven years after its dedication, according to Thompson and West, the church was "repaired, re-painted, the windows stained, and the pews and choir-gallery remodeled." In 1909 the building was further altered. At the south side, the central two bays were taken down and a wide gabled projecting wing resembling a transept was built in a style matching the

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original work. The stone used was also from the Prison Quarry. At the same time, a one-bay porch with modified Corinthian details was built to shelter the entrance doorway. A stone flight of steps, apparently the present ones, was built to give access to this porch. A one-story addition was built along the north side, providing a Sunday-school room and accessory rooms. A wide opening was made in the north wall of the church to connect with the Sunday school room. The opening was filled with a paneled screen which could be raised and lowered. This addition also extended one bay along the west end of the church, at the south corner of which the present secondary entrance porch was added. A small porch, also still existing, was built at the northeast corner of the church, to shelter a direct entrance to the Sunday school wing.

The interior of the church was given an apse whose floor was elevated above that of the church auditorium. It had a door opening to a small vestibule on the south, and another door opening to the north. On the wall at each side of the apse there was a tall window-like panel containing a painting. These were painted by Mrs. Hornaday, wife of the Rev. W.H.D. Hornaday, then pastor of the church. The ceiling sloped on each side to a central ridge; a large coved cornice marked its intersections with the walls.* These major alterations were said at the time to have given "to the Capital City the finest Methodist house of worship in the State."** The "new" church was dedicated by Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes during the annual meeting of The Nevada Mission in Carson City on August 25-30, 1909. The building was valued at \$18,000 at the time.

During the pastorate of J.L. Collins, who served from 1917 to 1921, the church was re-roofed.

In 1948, major interior changes were made. A dropped ceiling was installed, and the chancel and chancel furniture replaced. It was at this time that the tower assumed its current appearance, and that the entrance porch, installed c. 1909, was removed. The old, pressed tin ceiling and

*Noreen Humphreys, "One Small Step" (Carson City, 1969). p. 7.

**The description of the church after the 1909 renovations was taken from an old photograph taken before 1909, a post card some time after 1909, a reproduction of an interior photograph taken between 1908 and 1918, a letter written in July 1971 by Mrs. Mary E. Jasper, Santa Clara, California to the Rev. W.E. Banghart, Minister of the Church, and examination of the existing structure. (Mrs. Jasper is the daughter of the Rev. Hornaday, under

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remnants of the wall paintings done by Mrs. Hornaday still exist above the present lower ceiling. The chancel was again redecorated in 1968. The Sunday School wing appears little altered, except for the addition of one toilet and modernization of the kitchen.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

Among the early members of the Trustee Board of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Carson City was Gov. H.G. Blaisdell, the first elected Governor of the State of Nevada. Blaisdell served two terms, from 1864 to 1870. In 1869, Gov. Blaisdell paid off the remaining \$1,500 debt on the \$10,000 which the building had cost.

The many pastors who have served the church are listed in "One Small Step" (see bibliographical entry).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: There is an exterior photograph of the church as it existed from 1867 to 1909 in Steeple In The Sage (see bibliographical entry below.) The Nevada State Museum has early photographs of the exterior showing both the first stage (1867-1909) and the second (1909-1948). These are reproduced in the HABS collections. An interior photograph, 1909, after the interior remodelling undertaken then, is in the possession of Mrs. Marshall Humphreys of Carson City. It has been reproduced in The Good News (see bibliographical entry below). An early panoramic view of Carson City, reproduced both in the Second Biennial Report of the Nevada Historical Society, 1909-1910, and Davis, The History of Nevada (facing page 979), shows the building in its original condition.

2. Bibliography:

Davis, Sam. P., ed. The History of Nevada, Reno: The Elms Publishing Co., 1913.

Humphreys, Noreen. One Small Step, Historical Sketch of The Methodist-Episcopal Church, Carson City, Nevada. Carson City: 1969.

The Good News, First United Methodist Church Newsletter, vol. 1, No. 9, August, 1971.

whose charge the alterations were made). The documents were kindly furnished by Noreen Humphreys (Mrs. Marshall) of Carson City who has made a study of the history of this church.

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Loofbourow, Leon L., Steeple Among The Sage, A Centennial Story of Nevada's Churches. Lake Park Press, 1964.

Thompson, Thomas H., and West, Albert A. History of Nevada. Berkeley: Howell-North, 1958 (facsimile reprint of this volume, which was originally published in 1881).

Wren, Thomas, ed. A History of the State of Nevada, Its Resources and People. New York: Lewis Publishing Co., New York, 1904.

Prepared by: S. Allen Chambers, Jr.
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
December, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: The well constructed mid-nineteenth century stone church has details of Gothic derivation and interesting early twentieth-century additions. Now largely altered on the interior the church is in generally good condition.
- B. Description of Exterior:
 - 1. Overall dimensions: approximately 64' (five bays) x 75' (five bays); one story; rectangular with projections.
 - 2. Foundations: Sandstone ashlar foundation, with a plain water table, is generally low though the height varies somewhat because of the slight rise in grade toward the west.
 - 3. Elevation details:
 - a. General: The walls are dressed sandstone ashlar, light brown or yellow in color. This material was quarried locally and is variously dressed with pick and chisel. Courses vary in height between 1'-0" and 1'-6". Joints vary from 5/16" to 3/8" in width. Some old sand-lime mortar is visible in the joints but there has been considerable repointing at various periods. The older repointing was well done but some more recent cement mortar pointing is sloppy. Angle-buttresses are at the corners. The stonework of the additions matches the original work with the same material course heights.

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The two-centered pointed heads of the masonry openings are constructed as corbels, not true arches. One tie rod extends through the eastern portion of the building.

- b. Church: East Front: A centrally placed tower, square in plan, projects three feet from the gabled facade. A central entrance at the base of the tower consists of a pair of eight-panel doors below a colored glass transom which fills the head of the opening and is the form of a two-centered pointed arch. Above the entrance is a single pointed window containing colored glass. The tower with one pointed window on each elevation, terminates in a stone cyma recta moulding. Completing the tower is a low wooden belfry with three louvered openings on each elevation and a low pyramidal roof. A sheet-metal cornice, painted white, extends up the rakes of the gable and has short returns at the corners. The bed moulding is enriched with an egg-and-dart motif.

The South Front: One bay west of the front is a wide gabled wing suggesting a transept which projects four feet from the south wall and contains a single large two-centered arched window. This is a true arch. The window is triply divided by wooden colonnette mullions and tracery, glazed with colored glass. Above is a circular window in the gable, also containing colored glass. An extension on the west elevation end includes a porch with stone steps and two octagonal stone columns supporting a wood and sheet-metal entablature. The cornice is the same as the raked cornice. Under this porch is an linteled entrance having a door with five horizontal panels below a transom of colored glass.

- c. Sunday school addition: On the east front, adjoining the church to the north, the wall of the addition contains an entrance sheltered by a small porch and one bay containing a pointed window. The concrete foundation is just above grade. An angular buttress is at the corner.

The entrance porch, which is at the interior angle between the north wall of the church and the east wall of the addition, has a single fluted sheet-metal entablature. The entrance consists of a door with five horizontal panels with a rectangular transom of colored glass. At the north elevation are four bays, each containing a pointed window.

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d. West Elevation: This one-story wall is of stone and contains four windows and a rectangular doorway. A gabled projection which continues the axis of the church, rises above the wall and is faced with "rock-faced" sheet metal on its sides and gable. This part of the building is hip roofed, with half-gables on the east. The north and west elevations are covered with "rock-faced" sheet metal. The entablature matches that of the church and is also sheet metal.

4. Windows: Typical windows are glazed with colored glass, and have double-hung sash below a fixed rounded triangular unit at the head. The stone sills are plain.

C. Description of Interior:

This description applies only to the Sunday school addition, because the interior of the church has been entirely altered.

1. Plan: The central two bays of this wing are occupied by a square Sunday school and general purpose auditorium. This area was formerly connected to the church auditorium by a wide opening in the south wall, which has been closed. East of this room, is an entrance hall which leads to the east end of the church and to the outside. A larger area occupies the northeast corner of the wing and serves as a small meeting room. It connects with the larger room through a wide cased opening containing folding doors. West of the Sunday school room, is a kitchen. At the northwest corner a rear entrance hall gives access to the kitchen and to two toilets.

2. Interior finish: Varnished oak trim is typical. The plain window trim is beaded and the door trim has caps. Wainscoting is of vertical boarding. The high moulded base is new, as is the composition floor covering. Doors are yellow pine and have five horizontal panels.

D. Site and Surroundings:

This lot is located at the Northwest corner of Musser Street, on the south, and Division Street on the east. The main entrance is toward the east.

Prepared by: Harley J. McKee
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
Date of visit: August 19, 21, 1972

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PART III. Project Information

These records are part of the documentation made during the latter half of 1972 and the summer of 1973 in a project undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Nevada State Park System to record structures in Carson City and nearby areas.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. Eric R. Cronkhite, Administrator, Nevada State Park System, and Mrs. Marshall Humphreys of the Nevada Landmarks Society assisted the HABS recorders in Nevada. Professor Harley J. McKee, Supervisory Architect, National Park Service, selected the subjects and provided architectural data for the sixteen Carson City structures which were recorded. Historical documentation for these buildings was prepared by S. Allen Chambers, Jr., Architectural Historian, Historic American Buildings Survey. Project Supervisor for the 1973 Nevada Summer Team, which produced the measured drawings, was Robert L. Hartwig of Harvard University. Student assistant architects were John T. M. Creery (University of Utah), Robert P. Mizell (University of Florida), and Jack W. Schafer (University of Cincinnati). Photographs were made by Aaron A. Gallup of Sacramento, California.